

# Inaugural Address of Eric R. Greitens

January 9, 2017

Thank you Justice Breckenridge.

And thank you President Pro Tem Richard and Speaker Richardson, and my fellow citizens.

Today, we gather to take part in our republic's most revered ritual: the peaceful transfer of power.

Governor Nixon, you—and your team—have been gracious during this transition, and in doing so, have honored our system of government and upheld its finest traditions. We thank you.

I come before you today conscious of the fact that so many have given so much to this state—none more so than the families of our fallen. Those who have fallen fighting our wars, enforcing our laws, fighting our fires.

I know these men and women; I have served with them. I know the pride of carrying our nation's flag abroad—and I have felt the grief of burying too many friends beneath that flag at home.

Their families sit with us today as a testament, not to loss—though their loss has been great—but to love, the tremendous love that so many have for our country, for our state, for our fellow citizens.

We hope that you feel our state's gratitude. Your loved ones gave their lives—and in their sacrifice, they made possible the democratic renewal we solemnly mark today.

We have inherited their legacy. We have also inherited an immense responsibility: to make the lives we live worthy of the lives we have lost.

The people have spoken; a new direction has been decided.

For decades, Missourians have talked about change. Now it's time to fight for that change.

No one imagines that all of these battles will be won overnight—or over four years, or even eight. But we begin today.

Our state's world famous motto, "Show me," reminds us that Missourians don't much value big talk.

Our state's great history reminds us that Missourians have always understood that big achievements demand hard work.

"Show me" doesn't mean "Give me." It means "prove it can be done, and we will do it."

It was from Missouri that the West was won—and here was laid the first mile of the interstates that joined America in ever closer union.

In Missouri, we built the steamships that plied the Mississippi.

It was people of Missouri who believed that a human being could fly across the Atlantic Ocean alone.

And it was Missourians who built the capsule in which an American first orbited the earth.

That is who we were. It remains who we are.

This state in the heart of America has proven that the worst in our history can be overcome by the best in our people.

It was here that a slave named Dred Scott was told by the United States Supreme Court that a black man had no rights that a white man need respect—and it was a son of Missouri, a poet named Langston Hughes, who delivered the best answer to Dred Scott's unjust judges, when he said: "I, too, am America."

In that same spirit, we are all Missouri.

This does not mean we will agree on everything. In fact, we should not agree on everything.

Proverbs reminds us, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

The Lord put each of us here for a purpose. Sometimes the purpose of our opponents is to be our teachers.

There are big fights ahead for big things, and our new administration won't back down because of political pressure or political correctness.

Yet even as we fight for our convictions, we resolve that the greatest conviction, is to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Our ears will be open to reason, and our eyes alert to new facts.

We will go to work with humble hearts, and we will extend our hand in friendship to all those who will take it, but...

To those who would commit violence against a fellow citizen...

To those who would abuse a child...

To those who would assault a member of law enforcement...

To those who would steal from the needy...

I assure them this: they will feel the might, strength, and resolution of the firm fist of justice.

As Governor, I will always remember why you sent me here and what you expect from me. I will be loyal to your needs and priorities—not to those who posture or pay for influence.

This is the people's house. And to those who would trouble this house for their own selfish and sinful gain, hear me now: I answer to the people. I come as an outsider, to do the people's work.

And I know that the people do not expect miracles, but they do expect results—and we will deliver.

Yet no matter how well we do in government, there is a limit to what government can do well.

One of the worst lies of our present politics is the false promise that government can fix any problem and find every answer.

That never has been—and never will be—part of America’s promise to its people.

But together, our people can fulfill America’s oldest and best promises.

An administration can work on schools and invest in education. But I know—not only as your Governor, but as a father—that a child learns more than her letters when she falls fast asleep to the soft sounds of a parent reading to her.

An administration can do its part to empower business leaders to do good and to dare greatly — but the doing and daring is up to you.

An administration can render a check. But no amount of money given by a government can ever provide the meaning, strength, and dignity that comes from a good-paying job.

An administration can commit resources to serve those in need. But bureaucracy is the wrong place to look if you’re seeking compassion. Caring comes from individual people, inspired by the ancient ideal laid down in Isaiah: “If you tend to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday.”

An administration can invest in police and law enforcement. But the most important anti-crime program ever known is a dad playing ball with his son—and setting his boy an example of how a strong man cherishes women, protects the young, and honors the old.

Everywhere Sheena and I visit in this great state, we ask people to pray for us. I can feel the power of those prayers around me today.

I asked you to fight alongside me. You have—I know you will.

And now, gratefully accepting the responsibility that you have entrusted to me, let’s get to work.

God bless the people of Missouri. God bless you all.

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